DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 078 500 EA 004 997

AUTHOR	Place, Roger A.
TITLE	Do You Need (or Want) Students on the School Board?
PUB DATE	26 Feb 73
NOTE	4p.; Paper presented at American Association of School Administrators Annual Meeting (105th, Atlantic City, New Jersey, February 24-28, 1973)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Boards of Education; *Cocurricular Activities; Governance; Organization; Speeches; Student Attitudes; *Student Government; Student Organizations; *Student Participation; *Student Responsibility; *Student Role
IDENTIFIERS	*Board Student Relationship

ABSTRACT

In this paper the author discusses some of the new approaches for securing student input into school governance. Some of these approaches are the principal's cabinet, the superintendent's cabinet, and the student school board. The author feels, however, that at the present time there are too many attendant obstacles in making students full-fledged members of official school boards. These obstacles center on statutory regulations, high mobility rates for this age group, and adverse administrator reaction. The best plan of action would appear to be to retain, remodel, and revitalize the existing student councils, interrelating them with one of the newer approaches such as that of the student school board. Examples are drawn from developments in the secondary schools of the City of Norfolk; emphasis is placed on the need for structuring student input. (Author)

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
105th Annual Convention
Atlantic City, N. J. February 24-28, 1973

ED 078500

SPEAKER: Roger A. Place, Director of Secondary Education, City Schools, Norfolk, Va.

TOPIC: DO YOU NEED (OR WANT) STUDENTS ON THE SCHOOL BOARD?

PLACE: Room 11, Convention Hall

TIME: Monday, February 26, 2:30 P.M.

PROGRAM: Page 58

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

In this discussion I will attempt to describe the various methods for student input into school governance; use Norfolk as a case study in explaining the development of a student school board; outline a student school board framework; describe several activities of Norfolk's student school board; and stress the need for structuring student input. Finally, I will attempt to answer the question, "Do you need or want students on the school board?"

Traditionally, the prevalent method for student input into school operation and governance was to use student councils and student cooperative associations. In fact, in the very recent past, this convention and the convention for secondary school principals would have sessions on "How to Put Life into Your Student Council." With the demands of contemporary American society and of our knowledgeable, sophisticated youth, change is imperative in most areas of education. This appears to be especially true in the area of student input into school operation. New approaches are needed which evolve from the current structure. Reasons for the new approaches are as follows:

1. To make a learning experience out of student militancy and to democratically channel it.

2. To involve students in developing relevant courses

3. To have a channel of communication that is more collegial than the historical bureaucratic channels of communication which usually go down the line

4. To provide a pressure valve that will bring student concerns to the front while maintaining and improving the instructional program

5. To provide a functioning role in policy-making for the students

6. To enable students, who often demand instantaneous change, to understand the orderly, deliberating process of change

7. To foster integrated student-to-student activities among students from different schools

EA 005 997

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

8. To emphasize that more student control over school operation involves added responsibility which must be accepted

9. To facilitate more student interaction with the official school board, the superintendent, and the upper echelon central office administrators.

Various school systems across the nation are utilizing these newer approaches. These approaches may be summarized as: the principal's cabinet composed of students within a school; the superintendent's cabinet composed of students from the various secondary schools within a school system; the student school board with student representation from the various secondary schools in a school system; and finally, students serving on school boards in an official capacity.

In a recent survey appearing in Nation's Schools, almost two-thirds of the administrators queried opposed eighteen to twenty-one year old citizens serving as voting members on official school boards. Reasons cited for this stance were conflict of interest; lack of maturity, judgment, and perspective; and insufficient experience in decision-making.

Becoming more specific, the overriding reasons mitigating against students serving as full-fledged school board members are statutory regulations requiring that a member be eighteen or twenty-one years of age and the high mobility of people in this age bracket as they pursue their education, vocation, or military service. Therefore, in many instances, younger members would be unable to complete their term of office. This would cause unnecessary disruption of school board continuity. It should be stated at this point that I personally favor students on school boards but also feel that the attendant obstacles make it impractical, if not impossible, to implement this position. The other approaches which were mentioned earlier accomplish in large measure the school governance objectives of having students on school boards. These approaches if implemented by astute, seasoned administrators are practical and are working throughout the nation. Attention will be focused on one of these--the student school boards.

ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDENT SCHOOL BOARD

The Student School Board, in addition to providing advice to the official School Board, has engaged in numerous activities during its three years of operation. Several of these activities are enumerated and described. A comprehensive survey of senior high school students was undertaken by the Student School Board last year. This surveywas performed by the Student School Board members in conjunction with Norfolk City Schools' Department of Secondary Education and Department of Research. The survey results were tabulated during the summer. Periodic meetings with the Student School Board representatives, the Department of Secondary Education, and the Department of Research have been held during the fall to organize the results into a polished, comprehensive report to be presented to the official School Board in the very near future. From this activity, one can begin to understand the large amount of time needed to complete a comprehensive project of this sort with student involvement. A survey of student opinion regarding modular scheduling at Maury Senior High School is currently being considered.

Last year the Student School Board, with the sanction of the Superintendent and the official School Board, organized a voter registration campaign for students in our senior high schools who were eighteen years

of age or older. Although some obstacles were encountered in this activity, for the most part, it was judged successful.

Last year the Department of Secondary Education conducted an intensive evaluation and restructuring of the courses offered in the secondary schools in the City of Norfolk. Approximately thirty courses were either added or underwent major revision for the 1972-73 school year. The Student School Board had extensive input into this process. In some cases students participated on the curriculum committee which developed the course description, course outline, and performance objectives. In addition to these curriculum activities, the Student School Board was instrumental in developing a final examination exemption policy which met with mixed success in our senior high schools and a class rank policy which received high acceptance.

In order to increase the safety and welfare of our secondary school students a "wallet" ID system was instituted last year. Because of several shortcomings of this system a pilot program was developed for lapel ID's. The overriding purpose of this is to immediately identify an outsider in our secondary schools who may have no legitimate business in the schoolhouse. The Student School Board members of Maury Senior High School, recently scheduled on a modular/flexible basis, volunteered that their school be used as the senior high school pilot school. Although the School Board members are having a difficult time in selling the idea to their fellow students at Maury, it appears that the use of the lapel ID will be more successful than if it had been implemented by administrative fiat.

Perhaps the most important activity of the Student School Board is a joint luncheon with the official School Board during the fall in which matters of concern are freely discussed and attempts at resolution are formulated. This establishes rapport between the official School Board and the Student School Board and, in many instances, has resulted in resolution of certain problems. Some of the topics discussed at this year's joint luncheon were the modular scheduling program at Maury and the use of independent time; the problems being encountered in after-school activities in a desegregated city with no available late afternoon transportation; students' perception that desegregation in the Norfolk City Schools is progressing very well; control of certain students who deprive the vast majority of students of their privileges and rights; and student belief that there is an excessive number of rules governing behavior. This joint luncheon between the Student School Board and the official School Board was very favorably covered by one of the local newspapers.

EVOLVING STRUCTURE

As the operation of the Student School Board continues additional structure becomes necessary. This is especially true in the area of Student School Board member selection. For the 1972-73 school year, the Norfolk Student School Board members were selected according to the following guidelines:

1. Students who were members last year had first priority.

2. The elected president of the Student Cooperative Association (S.C.A.) was automatically one of the three representatives from each school

3. The other representatives could be chosen by their respective schools in such a manner as to racially balance the school team. These

selections were made in such a manner as to give high input to the S.C.A., schoolhouse administrators, teaching staff, student organizations, and most importantly, the general student body.

In conclusion, these guidelines for selection provided an interlocking relationship with the S.C.A., continuity with last year's Student School Board, representation reflecting the student body, and racial integration.

This year's Student School Board developed the following objectives:

1. To work with the official School Board and the staff of the Superintendent in an advisory capacity to establish better communications between administrators and students.

2. To provide possible solutions to problems confronting students in the Norfolk City School System by making recommendations to the official School Board.

3. To report to the official School Board at least once a month on the course of action the Student School Board is undertaking.

4. To convey a workable knowledge of the overall operation of the Norfolk City Schools to students of the school system.

In addition, a pledge and standards for a School Board member were adopted and implemented this year. The initial work and investigation for the pledge and standards were completed last year. Again, this represents the need for the additional structure.

CONCLUSION

New approaches for securing student input are experiencing success throughout the nation. Some of these approaches are the principal's cabinet, the superintendent's cabinet, and the Student School Board. At the present time, there are too many attendant obstacles in making students full-fledged members of official School Boards. These obstacles center on statutory regulations, high mobility rates for this age group, and adverse administrator reaction. At present the best plan of action appears to be retention, remodeling, and revitalizing the existing student councils interrelated with one of the newer approaches, such as the Student School Board.

###